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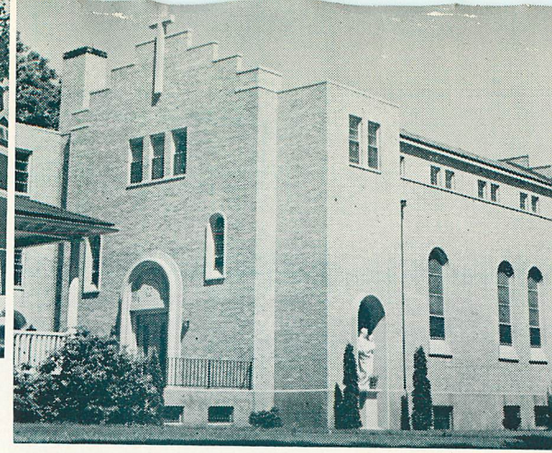
CLARENDON HILLS, ILLINOIS

Photographs by:

Beatrice Kerbelis
Vytautas Maželis
Rev. V. Paulauskas
Vytautas Valaitis
and others

IMMACULATA PRESS
Putnam, Connecticut

The Mother - House



The Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of

R. F. D. 2, Putnam, Connecticut

Villa Maria Rest Home
Thompson, Connecticut

57 Sylvan Ave
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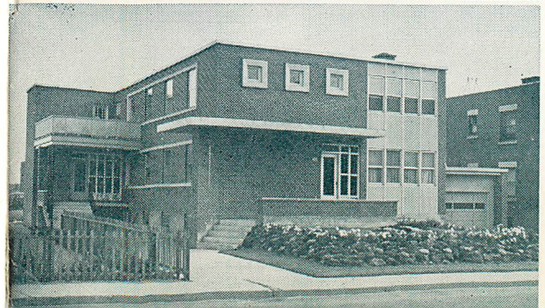

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That is how it happens. You know very little beforehand, and the little that you do know has been forgotten from fear. Only after entering do you begin to understand what a vocation really is.

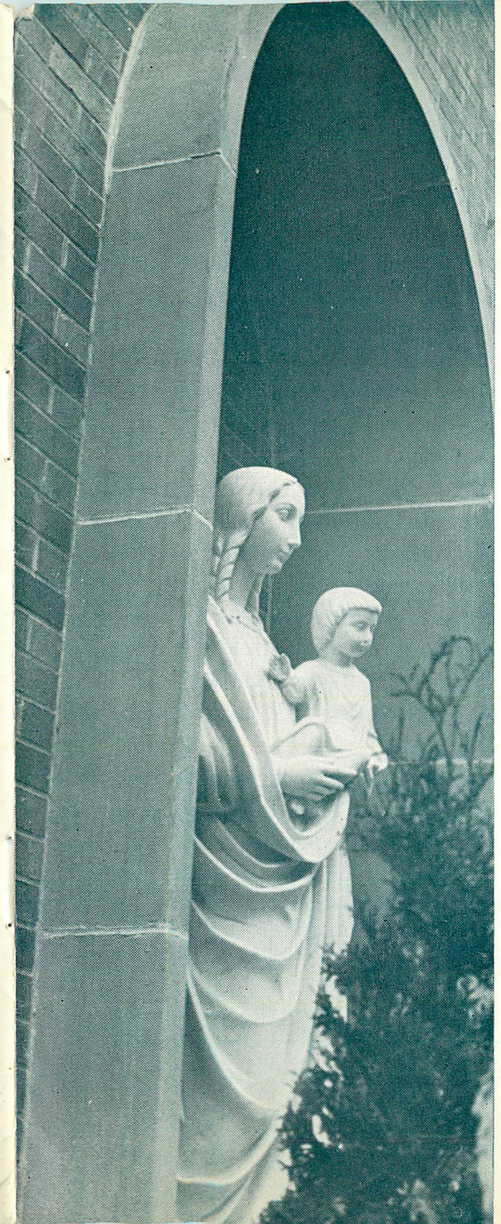
Sometimes you think of the past: you smile. You wanted a home — you have Heaven. You wanted a family — the whole world is your family: there are no strangers. And you are happy!

One day I was thinking of what I would say, if I had a chance, to a girl such as I was. Advertisements facilitate everything. I could not tell her that it is easy. Easy things are shallow things. This life is an offering, an offering of one's entire being to God for humanity. That is not easy! But I could tell her from the heart that I cannot imagine a greater joy than that of living in the House of the Lord.

That day — of your reception into the Novitiate — you receive the veil, you begin to live, to give yourself to Christ. The journey is long, but exciting. And, most important of all, you are never alone: Christ is ever with you.

Echoes can still be heard: "she locked herself up." — Locked up? Is serving humanity for Christ locking oneself up? Is the offering of every fiber, of every minute for humanity, locking oneself up?

I would tell that girl — My heart is full! If we give ourselves to the Fountain of Love, will we not be filled to overflowing with that same Love?



The modern world casts a puzzled glance at that strange element in society, known as "the Religious." Sometimes, it is indifferent to her, forcing the Sisters to live for persons with hearts of stone. Frequently, it is hostile, condemning her to the twentieth century catacombs of Communism. It ridicules her, for sarcasm is the weapon of the weak. But that is only part of the picture. There are Christians with open eyes and zealous hearts: they recognize a miracle in the enigma of the Religious life.

These thirty-six pages are an attempt to portray a miracle of God. From His hands flow the blessings which enable this band of women daily to choose Him and to live joyously in the House of God, bringing this joy and peace to a hungry, tired world.

We thank God! We praise Him!

We hope that through these pages He may inspire courageous souls to face the challenge of God and man — the challenge of being an enigma and a miracle.

May God bless you always!

The Sisters of the Immaculate Conception

of the Blessed Virgin Mary

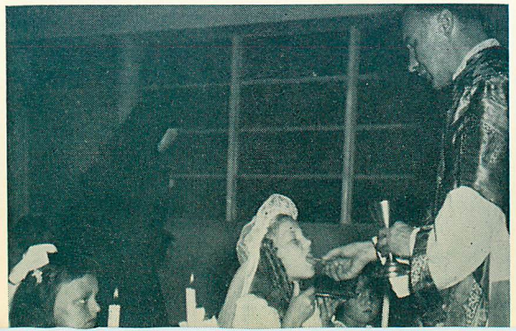
The Founder — the Servant of God Archbishop George Matulaitis

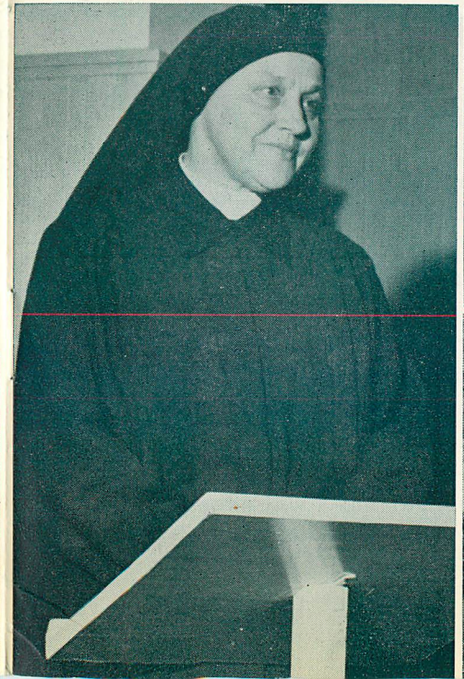
"Organize and sacrifice!"

In 1918 the consequences of the First War were affecting the whole world. For the Lithuanian nation, however, there was a joy such as the country had not known since the eighteenth century: independence! A new government, new institutions, new plans and ambitions seized upon the mind and heart of all Lithuania. The Church also saw new horizons for spreading the Word of God, so old, yet ever new.

Thus it was that the Servant of God, Archbishop George Matulaitis, founded the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a band of women, who "imbued with love of God and not deterred by labor, sacrifice, obstacles and dangers, serve His Church with all their might everywhere proclaiming Christ and His Gospel... where the Church is in greatest need, and use every available means..." *(Guiding Thought and Spirit)* Truly, the Sisters worked wherever Christian society needed them. Noteworthy is a curious clause in the act of Profession of Vows: "I further promise, with the help of God, to strive to persevere in the

The first five Sisters in America





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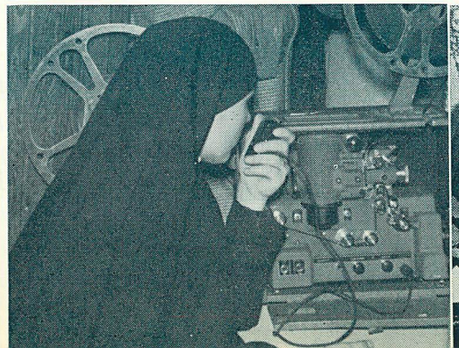
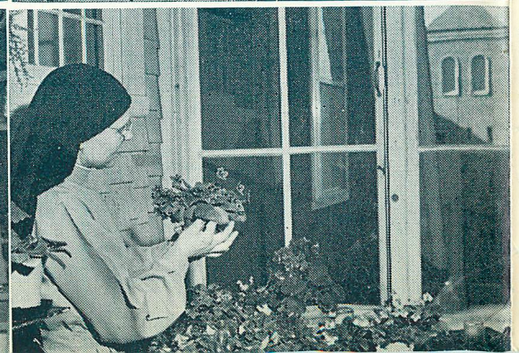
All Talents For the Lord!





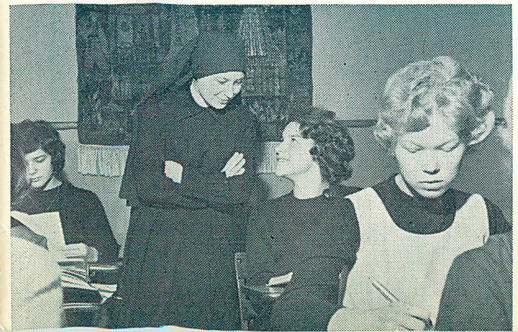
Congregation, and despite the commands of civil government, straitened social circumstances, or even persecutions, never to withdraw from the Congregation or do anything to weaken its discipline." A strange thing to promise at such an optimistic time!

In 1936 five Sisters left for the United States. Conditions were a living tribute to not only poverty, but destitution. What could five Sisters accomplish? They had nothing; could they hope for much? They had God, and their hearts were flaming with His love and zeal for His glory; they had hands which found no work unworthy of their care and attention.

How mysterious is Divine Providence! In 1945 Communism dropped an Iron Curtain, thus severing communication with the Sisters and the motherhouse in Lithuania. Among the displaced persons of World War II who arrived in America were some of these Sisters. Providence had guided them and strengthened them by that curious clause. Their love and work and prayer has enabled the seed to develop into the fruitful apostolate which this booklet portrays.

Mother M. Augusta (present Superior of the Congregation in America and Canada) and Mother M. Aloysa (previous Superior).

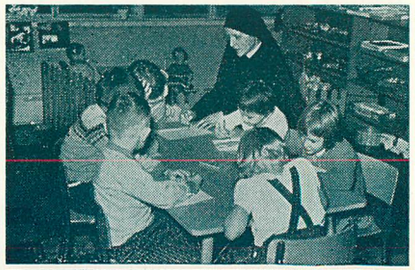
The work they began

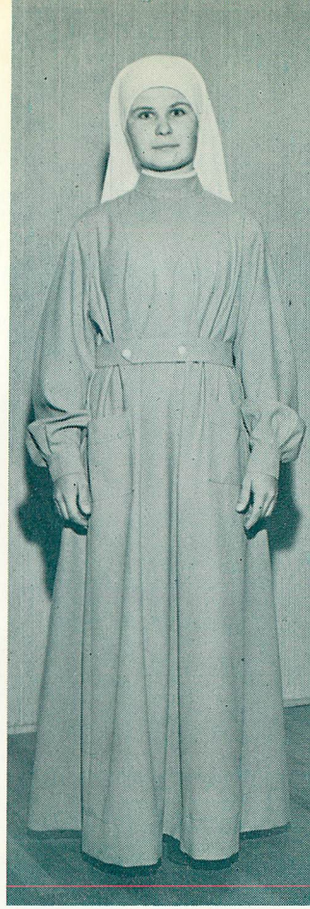


God's Little Ones

The future of the world is in their hearts.

Two day nurseries and a kindergarten — in Montreal since 1953, in Toronto since 1956 — continue the Congregation's endeavor to guarantee the world a bright tomorrow, and heaven — a heavy population, for "of such is the kingdom of heaven".





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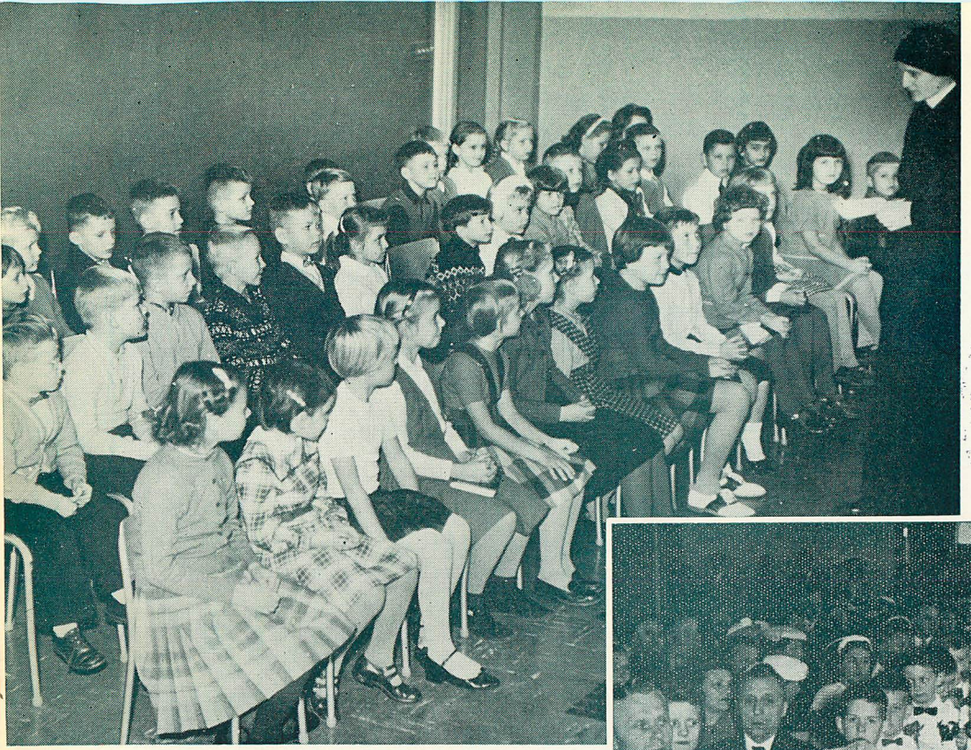
Flexibility, a mark of the Congregation, must be cultivated by each Sister. She cannot limit herself: all talents must be developed to their highest potential: art, music, public speaking, leadership. In general, the Sister prepares, as well as she can, for all possibilities, conditions and needs.

Thus the Sister is formed into an active co-worker with Christ. Her natural capacities developed, she unites them to His all-powerful grace. Not one moment of her life is monotonous or purposeless. The harvest is great; her heart burns with zeal — she is prepared to work wherever the glory of God or the love of neighbor may call her.

In a kindergarten the child learns to work, play and share with others; to express himself. He meets God and brings Him home. The Sisters thus tend the seeds of tomorrow's good families and a healthy society.

These two Houses also conduct Sunday afternoon recreational programs for girls, moderate Catholic youth organizations, instruct in Lithuanian Saturday schools. The harvest is great!



First Holy Communion

What joy to prepare a child's heart to receive the Lord for the first time!

This morning — the morning they will never forget! They approach the Lord's Table to eat the Bread of Heaven... With Him life is beautiful and fruitful.

"And I (the priest officiati in the name of Almig eternal life."

"The Lord is the portion my cup: it is thou that to me."

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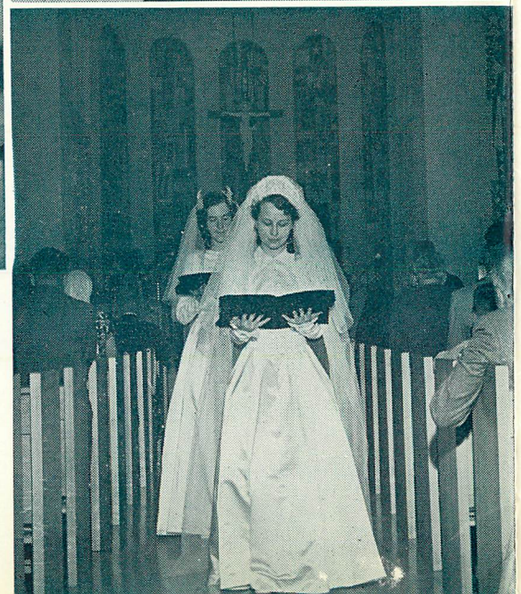
(Ceremonial)



"Suffer the little ones to come to me."

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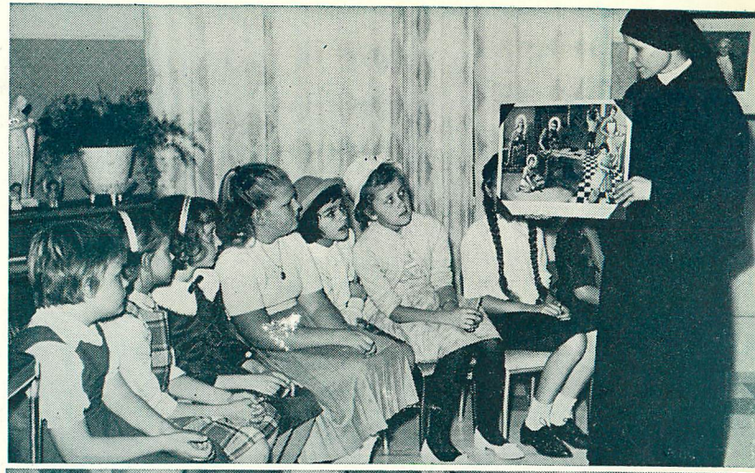
We are truly living when we know God intimately, when we love Him with our whole being and serve Him with all our strength.

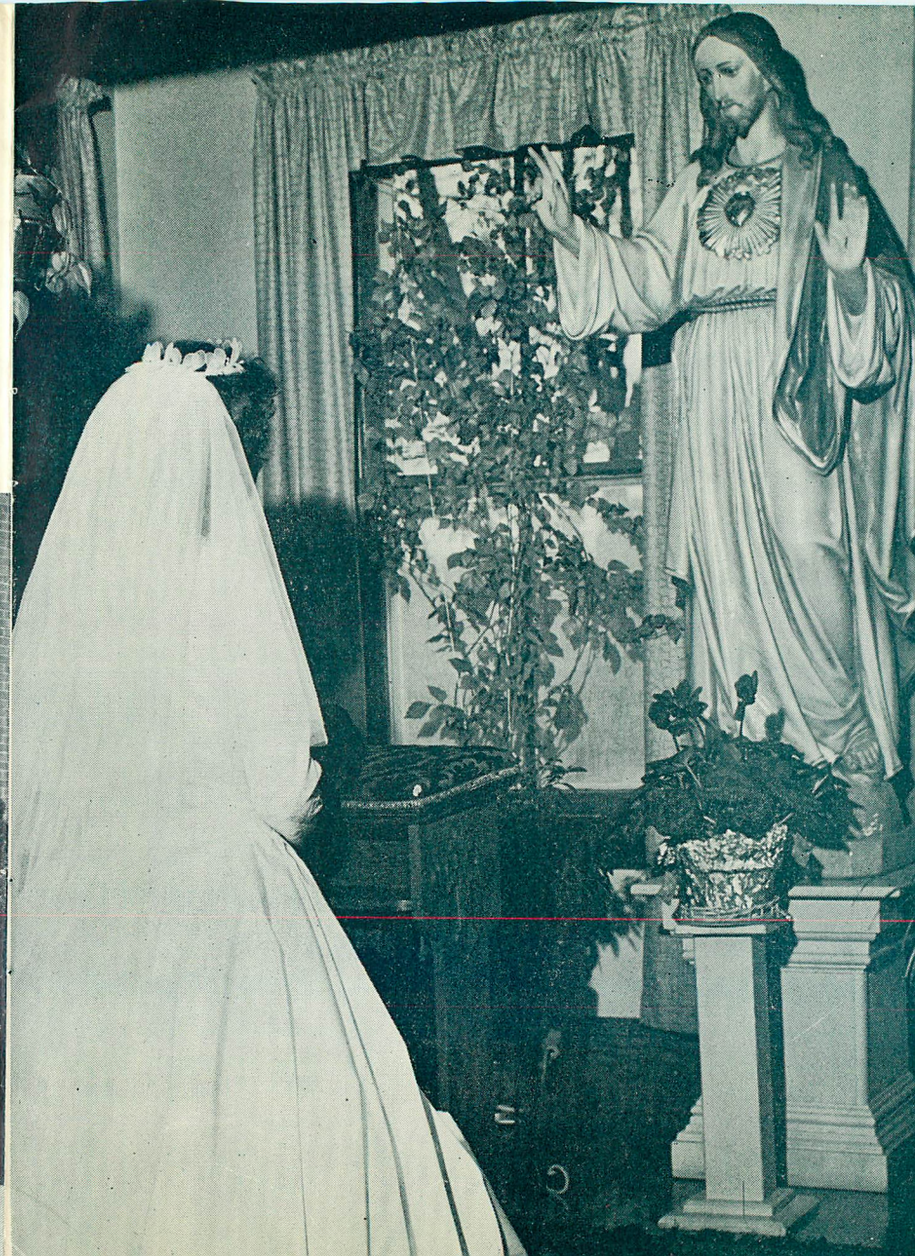
Catechetical lessons are the means of teaching children how to live — in God. The Sisters teach the truths of the Faith, the requisites of a good life. The grace of God does the rest.

These innocent hearts are fertile soil for the Word of God!



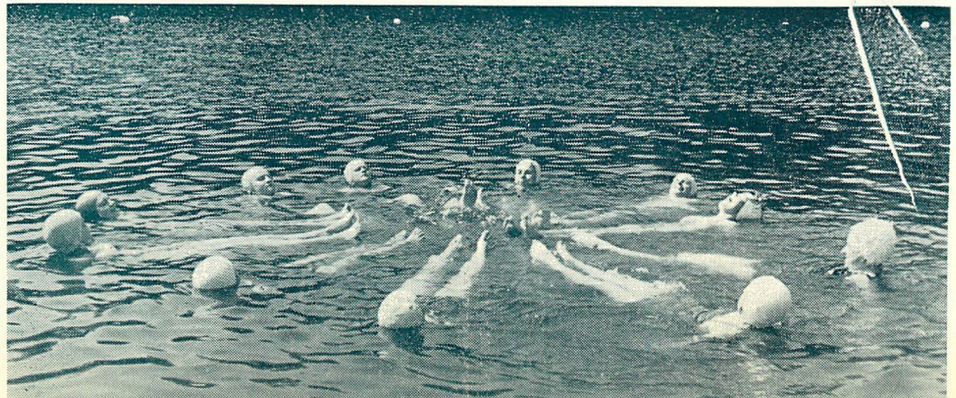
Summer Camps

To play, to sing, to grow in age and grace!



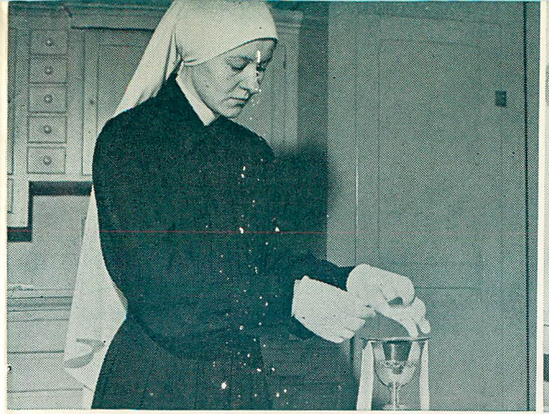
What does a Summer Camp mean to a girl? It means adventure: for some — the first trip away from home; for others — the first contact with flowers, grassy fields and all the other beautiful things not found in cities. For all — it is the happiest of all experiences: having many friends, and first of all — Christ. The sunny days display new ideals, new responsibilities, new enthusiasm.

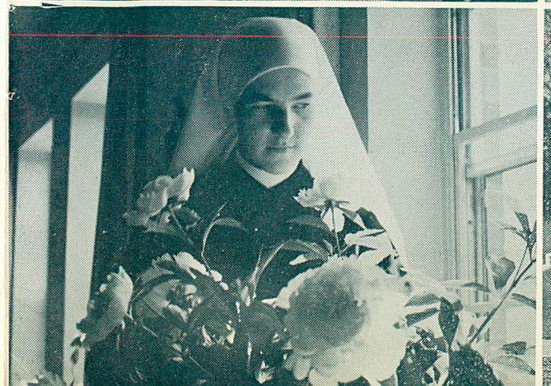
The Sisters conduct two Camps: Camp Immaculata, Putnam, Connecticut; Dainava, Manchester, Michigan.



Youth Formation

"Raudondvaris" is prominent in the memory of many young women in Lithuanian society. It is the name of the residence for Lithuanian girls. Here girls from North and South America have the opportunity to learn the art of harmonizing two rich cultures, of opening their hearts and minds to others, of growing firm in principles and mature in judgments.





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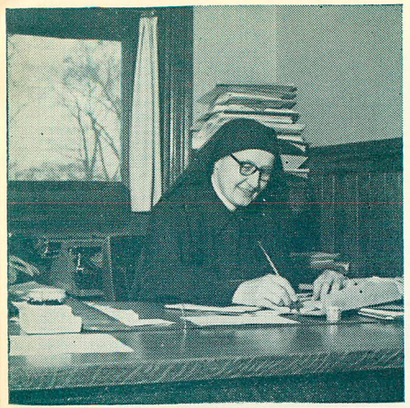
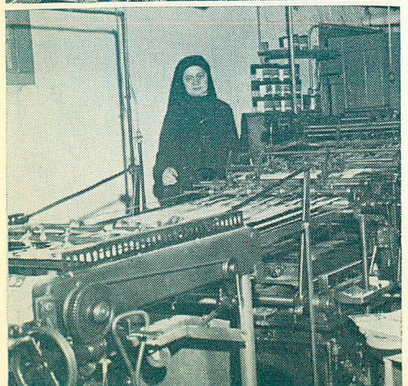
The year of silence has begun. Recollection, prayer, the learning and practice of the interior life, brings the Novice closer to the Lord, her life's Sun. In Its rays, the buds of her capabilities begin to blossom. Each day is rich, alive with His own life. And this is just the beginning, just the first day of spring — spiritual preparation!

The boarders attend Annhurst College or Putnam Catholic Academy. In addition to these studies, they learn Lithuanian songs and dances, plays, arts, as well as how to cope with current problems facing the modern Catholic woman. They publish an annual newspaper "Raudondvario Padangėj".

Their year is full, conducive to maturing noble personalities, good Catholics, educated women.

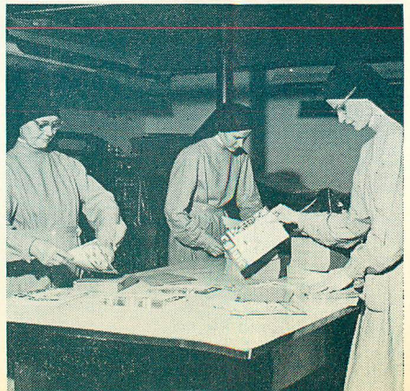
The Sisters confidently work, pray and sacrifice that, with each girl's effort, the seed may grow and produce much fruit in God. This is a challenging task in a world with negates so many Christian principles. But it is not in vain!





Apostolate of the Press

Many hands — a child's, a man's, a women's, a priest's — open a mail-box and take from it one of the six magazines printed at Putnam. The Sisters, as apostles of the press, print and distribute good literature: books, prayer-books, magazines, pamphlets — that the Good Tidings may reach more people. They publish and print "Eglutė", the only Lithuanian monthly magazine for children in the free world.



"Accept, dear sister, as a sign of your immortality, the light of Christ, that, dead to the world, avoiding the works of darkness, you may live for God." *(Ceremonial)*

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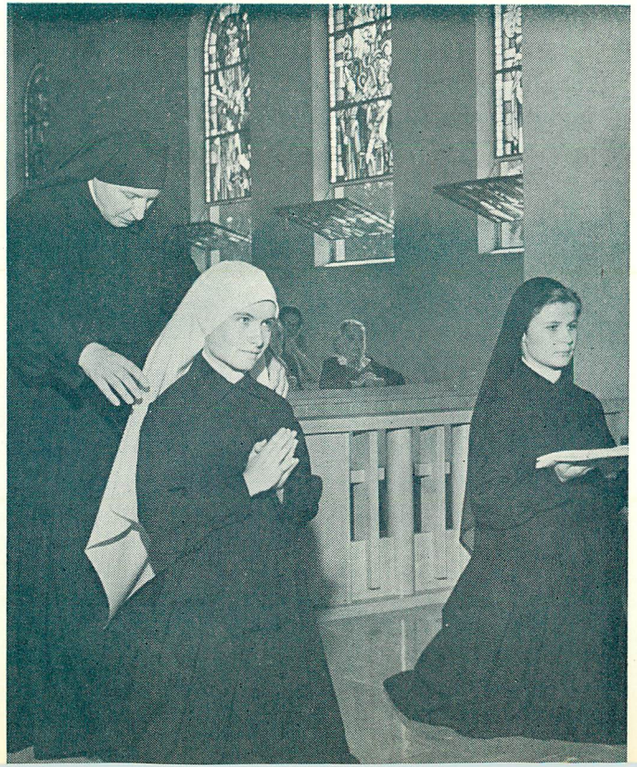
The Step Into The Novitiate

"Accept, dear sister, this veil, that you may give your love to no one, but God." *(Ceremonial)*



This is an important field of activity, for good literature lifts hearts and enlightens minds.

Life's Sunset

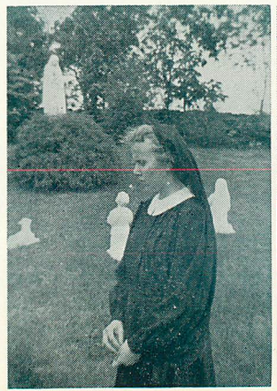
Love serves! It serves the small child meeting God for the first time. It serves those perfecting their lives in preparation to see the Lord.

First Step –

The Postulancy

This is a new life, both for the candidate and for her family.

Six months to a year are spent in mutual acquaintanceship of postulant and Congregation. She observes, studies, prays, consults, decides.

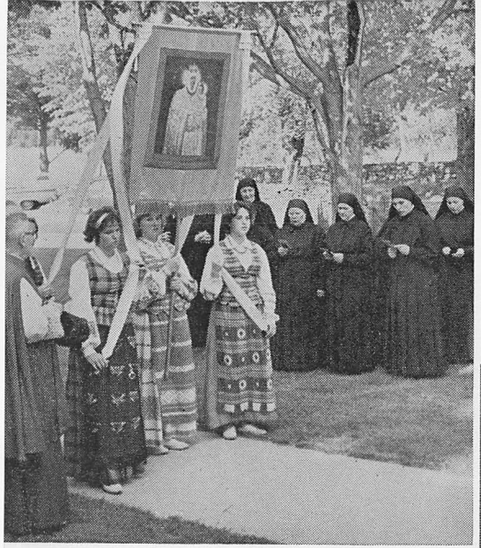


Lord of the Harvest, are you calling me? *Would I fit?* Yes — if you are not afraid to love, to offer yourself to God, to enter His House with your whole heart, entire will, all your strength. A good moral life and an agreeable character are prerequisites.

Love of neighbor expresses itself in works. The candidate, therefore, needs a deep mind, a strong will, emotional balance, as well as the strength and desire to work with others, to share, and to spread the Kingdom of God.

Am I called? Only you can know that. Prayer, objective reasoning, sincere consultation — these elucidate, but you alone can answer — yes!

What kind of love does the Sister serving the aged have? It is a nurse's love for the weak; a sister's love for those in need of a sympathetic heart; a daughter's love for those who never had children or who no longer have children; and it is more — it is Christ's love, that love which annihilates self, which knows no bounds, whose fruits will be seen only in Eternity.



Love shares. Having found the Silence in which God speaks, the Sisters wish to disclose it to others, that they, also, may hear Him, thereby finding strength, peace, solace.

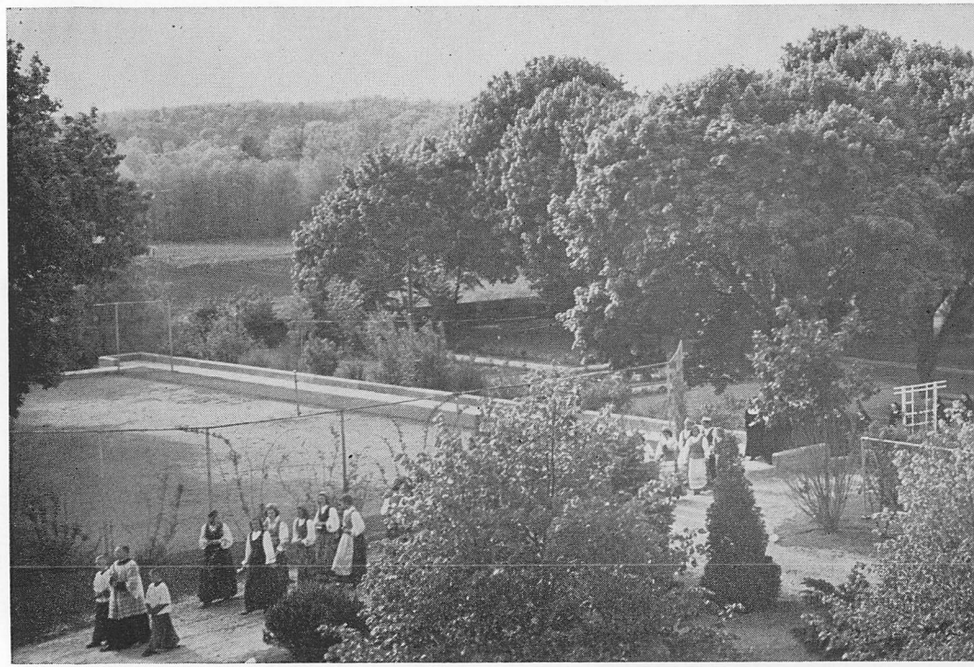
Teen-age girls, college students and working girls, married women come to Putnam for a day or a week-end to unite their lives to Him Who said "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life".

Processions unite souls. In common prayer and hymns one experiences the meaning of belonging to the Mystical Body of Christ.

Retreatants are given the opportunity of closer acquaintance with God.

Days of Recollection, Retreats

To Rise and To Raise Others To God!



This is the highest aim of the Sisters of the Immaculate Con